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equal to" to --≤--;

Line 9, change "to be less than or equal to" to --at ≤--;

Lines 9-11, delete "elevator means ... hot plate 1, and the"

Line 11, change "plate-like material to be treated W" to --workpiece--;

Lines 11-12, change "greater than or equal to" to --≥--;

Lines 12-13, change "After such a In this instance" to --Finally--;

Line 13, change "atmosphere" to --furnace--;

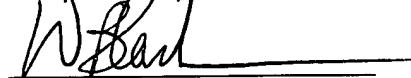
Lines 14-15, change "plate-like material to be treated W lowers" to --workpiece
is lowered--.

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present Preliminary Amendment-A the claims in the application are claims 1-12, of which claim 1 is independent.

The specification, claims and abstract have been amended to overcome minor informalities therein, to generally have more idiomatic form, to eliminate all multiple dependencies in the claims, and to present new claims 5-12. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments are fully supported by the original application.

Respectfully submitted,



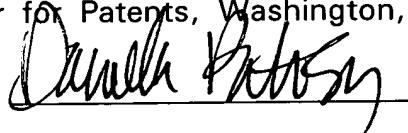
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JPC/ms